VISIT…

MARCH OF THE SANE

A Short Adventure for Four 5th-Level Player Characters

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March of the Sane is a short D&D adventure for four 5th-level characters. The scenario is in part a mystery and in part an opportunity for the PCs to think about their places in the world and their ultimate goals. It features multiple opportunities for in-character debate and discussion before the final climax, which is likely to involve combat.

The action in this adventure centers around a wandering band of cultists. Though it can be placed almost anywhere in your campaign world, it works best in an area that has no strong guard or patrol to keep the cultists in check. A road and a roadside tavern are the only required features of the setting. As always, feel free to adapt the material presented here as you see fit to make it work with your campaign.

PREPARATION

You (the DM) need the D&D core rulebooks—the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*—to run this adventure. This scenario utilizes the D&D v.3.5 rules, but it can easily be adapted for use with the 3.0 rules as well.

To get started, print out the adventure. Read through the scenario at least once to familiarize yourself with the situation, threats, and major NPCs (particularly their motivations). The Adventure Synopsis details the order in which certain events occur, assuming that the PCs don't interfere.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information that you can read aloud or paraphrase for the players at the proper times.

ADVENTURE BACKGROUND

Years ago, the tomb of a necromancer named Beul Tanzon was opened by a band of adventurers seeking to destroy an evil relic that was reputedly interred there. Expecting the tomb to be full of undead, they had taken the precaution of bringing along several clerics of varying power levels to turn them. Even so, however, the heroes were hard pressed to defeat the army of undead that greeted them. The more experienced priests joined the heroes in dealing with the most powerful opposition, while the younger priests turned most of the zombies and other minor undead. In a few days, the augmented party reached the bottom layer of the tomb and destroyed both the artifact and the wraith that had once been Tanzon.

But although the heroes had defeated every undead creature they found within the tomb, they had not

managed to destroy them all. In particular, most of the zombies had shuffled mindlessly away when turned by the younger priests, walking right out the entrance because it was in their path. After traveling a considerable distance overland, they eventually found and attacked the small village of Evenfird.

Nearly everyone in the village was killed in the bloody assault, and the few survivors fled—except for a boy named Wautto. Hidden in the basement of his home, he watched through a grimy window as the zombies slew everyone they could find, leaving the corpses of his family and friends strewn about the streets.

When they had finished with the tomb, the heroes set off in pursuit of the escaped zombies. By the time they arrived at Evenfird and slew the zombies, it was much too late for the village. After interring the bodies, they searched for survivors and found Wautto in his basement. Though the boy appeared none the worse for the trauma he had endured, he was actually more than a little insane. When the heroes explained that the zombies had escaped a tomb they had raided, Wautto realized that his "saviors" were ultimately responsible for the destruction of his home, and his mind fixated on that fact.

The heroes settled Wautto in an orphanage of exceptional quality, where he learned the art of oratory and gained experience in using words to sway the masses. In an effort to understand the events leading up to the destruction of his village, he buried himself in books. During his study of history and legends, one fact became crystal clear: Whenever evil arose, heroes came forth to defeat it. But invariably, these heroes were mere mortals. They did not spring fully formed from the void just to counter evil—they had existed well before it arose. Thus, Wautto's addled brain reasoned, the very presence of heroic individuals was what caused the evil in the first place. Without heroes to stop it, evil would not exist.

Based on such reasoning, Wautto concluded that the entire culture of heroism was a menace to society, and that those who supported and glorified it were insane. The sane, therefore, had a moral imperative to eliminate all heroes for the good of society.

When Wautto explained this concept to his instructors, they quickly corrected him, insisting that evil arises independently, not in response to heroism. Though he was not convinced, Wautto learned that he must keep his wisdom to himself if he hoped to finish his education. He also realized that it was impossible to destroy heroes directly because they were well suited to overcoming direct challenges. A more efficient technique would be to destroy the cultures and settlements that supported heroes. When he began making plans toward this end, Wautto slipped from merely insane to truly evil.

As soon as he had reached the age of majority, Wautto left the orphanage and set out to realize his vision. A persuasive speaker, he portrayed himself as a pacifist and preached against violence in any form. Soon, those who embraced his message that violence is wrong and evil began to follow him from town to town. With their aid, he launched a campaign to convince townsfolk that in order to have peace, they must refuse to support those who resort to violence—even violence against evil. As soon as a town rallied behind this concept, Wautto declared it a Place of Sanity and moved on, leaving a few cultists behind to watch over it.

Knowing that mortals are weak and likely to forget their morals when faced with true danger, Wautto gave the cultists he left behind explicit instructions on how to maintain the nonviolent status of a Place of Sanity. A few weeks after his departure, the cultists would put the residents into a deep sleep, then depart, leaving the town vulnerable to any hostile forces nearby. Thus, many Places of Sanity have fallen prey to orc raids and undead attacks just weeks after Wautto has left. Wautto treats the residents of these towns as martyrs and blames any hero who grew up there or even visited the town for bringing violence down upon it. Eventually, he hopes to gain control of the entire kingdom through the activities of his cult.

Wautto's cultists, known as the Sane, are trained in the martial traditions of staff fighting. He insists that this training is purely a health benefit meant to ensure that his followers remain hale and hearty enough to stand up to the long trips and harsh conditions they must face. In truth, he often uses his followers as a crude army to force his will on a small farm or wilderness-based inn that refuses to turn away heroes and adventurers. For such purposes, he uses only those followers who are loyal enough not to question the logic of using violence to force nonviolence on others.

Wautto's followers are fanatically devoted to him and support his mad scheme wholeheartedly. He has nursed those who have been with him the longest along the road to madness by slowly introducing small revelations and changes, each minor in and of itself, until they accept the occasional need for violence without question. The few who aren't aware of his sometimes violent methods either refuse to believe any evidence of such or claim that Wautto must have a

reason for his machinations. Whatever their personal levels of knowledge, all of the Sane are completely besotted with Wautto and believe that humanoids can have peace and happiness forever if people simply stop being heroic.

Thus far, Wautto's message has resulted in the complete destruction of only a few towns, since his message of hero-free life has yet to catch on broadly. But his power is growing steadily as he attracts more and more followers. Wautto has even come to the attention of certain fiendish outsiders, a few of which have begun to wonder if his evil bent and great speaking skills might be of use in their own schemes.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The events in this scenario proceed in the following order unless the PCs choose to intervene. If they do, modify the event sequence as needed to account for their actions.

The adventure begins when the PCs encounter a fiendish bird attacking some of Wautto's cultists. This creature is actually an agent of some minor fiends sent to test his loyalty to his own men. Shortly thereafter, Wautto and a group of the Sane arrive at a small roadside tavern called the Giant's Blade. Wautto tries to convince the innkeeper, Morrigan, to declare the inn a Place of Sanity and refuse service to anyone bearing weapons or magical apparel. Morrigan refuses the request but he allows Wautto and his followers to stay at the inn free of charge.

That night, Wautto receives a visit from Thaerraad, a greater barghest who is also an agent of the fiends interested in the mad prophet. Thaerraad offers Wautto great power in return for the regular sacrifice of his followers. This offer is the fiends' final test—if Wautto is willing to kill his loyal followers for personal gain, he's ready to become a true agent of evil. When Wautto agrees, Thaerraad assumes the form of a dire wolf and begins posing as his companion.

Emboldened by his newfound power, Wautto speaks eloquently in the tavern's common room the next morning, trying to convert patrons to his Cult of Sanity. How many he actually converts depends on whether the PCs are present and what they do, but in the end, Morrigan kicks all the Sane out of his establishment. That evening, Wautto sends several cultists to kidnap Angel, Morrigan's daughter. They leave a note offering the innkeeper a choice—death for his daughter, or open support of Wautto's cause. The note details where Morrigan can meet Wautto to become one of the Sane.

If the PCs do not intervene, Wautto eventually convinces Morrigan to make his inn a Place of Sanity, though he has to claim he has killed Angel and threaten the rest of the inkeeper's family to do so. When word of these events reaches the PCs, they have another opportunity to track down Wautto and deal whatever justice they feel is fitting. If they do not, Wautto grows in power and, with fiendish backing, becomes an even more dangerous force in the campaign.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

As the DM, you know best how to involve your characters in an adventure. If desired, you can use the following hooks to spur your imagination, modifying them as necessary to fit your campaign or the characters.

- The characters are going home after an adventure (or en route to another one) and happen upon a fiendish bird attacking the Sane.
- A friend or relative of a PC explains that he left another town shortly after it became a Place of Sanity, only to return a few weeks later and find everyone dead.
- Rumors of increased orc raids in this area have prompted a government official to hire some adventurers to investigate.
- Rumors abound of a new pacifist cult growing in the outlying areas of a kingdom. Adventurer friends of the PCs claim they have been turned away from inns where they used to stay and taverns where they used to drink. A man named Wautto is said to be the leader of this new cult.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

March of the Sane is a site-based adventure in which most of the action occurs in and around a roadside inn. The adventure begins when the characters reach encounter 1, below. At any time during the adventure, the characters may choose to do a bit of research on the situation.

RESEARCH

If the characters take the time to investigate Wautto's origin and activities, the researcher may attempt a bardic knowledge or Gather Information check. Compare the result to the table below. The character gains all the information for check results equal to or lower than her own.

Check Result	Information Gained
15	Wautto grew up in an orphanage.
20	He lost his parents when the town of Evenfird was wiped out by zombies.
25	While in the orphanage, Wautto expressed the belief that heroes cause evil and suffering and should therefore be eliminated. Recently, he has been successful in turning whole towns against heroes.
28	All the towns that Wautto has declared Places of Sanity have been wiped out within a few months. Such is the fate that pacifists suffer in this harsh world.

No check can reveal Wautto's current plans, but armed with knowledge of his background, the PCs might well work out his intentions for themselves.

1. THE SANE SCOUTS (EL 5)

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs are traveling by road toward the area where Wautto and his followers are currently campaigning.

> Only the rustling of leaves disturbs the unnatural silence on this rustic stretch of road. Normally, such a country road would be alive with the sound of animals, the buzz of insects, and the songs of hundreds of birds, but no creature stirs here. A feeling of impending danger pervades the scene.
>
> Suddenly, the silence is broken by the cries of people fleeing for their lives. From around a bend in the road ahead run six himans wearing simple robes, each carrying a wooden staff. Behind them runs a tremendous bird, its fierce eyes gleaming with malice. As it closes the distance, a few robed figures turn and try to defend themselves with their staves, but they are clearly no match for the monstrous avian.

Wautto's great evil and increasing insanity have begun to attract the attention of various evil outsiders, several of whom are considering him for a role as an evil priest, or perhaps even a general on some infernal battlefield.

Creatures: The six humans are Cultists of the Sane sent by Wautto to scout ahead for likely campsites and check for dangers. They had no trouble finding the latter.

The bird chasing the cultists is an achaierai sent by a fiend to see how Wautto responds to threats against his followers.

Tactics: Since Wautto hasn't told them to fight, the cultists are simply trying to escape. On the first round, each fights defensively and takes a move action, then makes a 5-foot step and uses the total defense action on the next round. On subsequent rounds, they alternate between these sets of actions. They know that such tactics are unlikely to save them, but they're willing to die rather than commit violence, since Wautto hasn't commanded any. If the PCs intervene on their behalf, the cultists run away.

The achaierai can't get home under its own power, and it's smart enough to realize that the PCs present the greatest threat if they interfere. It tries to take out melee combatants first, leaving the spellcasters for later. (Because of its high SR, it isn't very worried about spellcasters until they prove dangerous.) Since the achaierai can't flee to the safety of its home plane, it fights to the death.

Achaierai: hp 39; see *Monster Manual*, page 9.

Cultists (9): hp 8; see Appendix for statistics.

Development: If the PCs slay the achaierai, they find the cultists some distance ahead, tending their wounds. The cultists thank them and promise them a reward from their spiritual lord, Wautto the Sane, when he arrives to meet them at a certain roadside tavern in the morning. They then express the hope that the PCs used no violence against the creature but simply drove it away. If informed otherwise, they begin lecturing the characters on the evils of violence and insist that it would have been better to let them die. If permitted, the cultists also speak at length about Wautto, praising him as a holy man who spreads peace and wisdom but revealing no actual facts about his past. (They don't know any.)

The cultists gratefully accept any offers of escort to the inn where they intend to wait for Wautto, though they do not directly ask for such.

2. MARCH OF THE SANE (EL 6)

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs come within sight of the Giant's Blade the next morning.

> Ahead lies a fairly large, well-maintained roadside tavern. A wooden sign hanging over its main entrance bears the image of an oversized sword and the words "Giant's Blade." The smell of fresh-baked bread wafts from the building, and the sounds of cheerful banter emanate from within its stone walls.
>
> From somewhere farther ahead comes the sound of voices raised in song. Not all the lyrics of the song are clear, but the words "live together, live in peace" are repeated often. As the sound draws nearer, a short, red-haired man comes into view, leading a column of people. All are dressed in simple robes and carry rustic walking sticks.

The inn is the Giant's Blade, an establishment of excellent repute owned by a retired adventurer named Morrigan.

Creatures: Wautto the Sane and twenty-four members of his faux-pacifist cult have just arrived at the Giant's Blade.

Wautto the Sane: hp 27; see Appendix for statistics.

Cultists (24–33): hp 8; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: If forced to fight, Wautto immediately becomes invisible. He then takes a round to inspire courage among his followers. As part of his oration, he commands the cultists not to harm or threaten the toughest-looking combatant among his foes. In the next 2 rounds, he casts *blur* and *eagle's splendor* on himself, using his *pearl of power* if needed. Then he targets the toughest-looking combatant among his foes with a *charm person* spell and commands that person to defend him. Even if Wautto fails the opposed Charisma check, a *charmed* character is unlikely to allow anyone to seriously harm Wautto. After that, Wautto uses *Tasha's hideous laughter* and then *flare* to aid his servants. He keeps one *cure light wounds* spell ready to use on himself.

Wautto's followers are perfectly willing to die for him. They throw their bodies in front of him to protect him and attempt a mass attack against anyone attacking him from range. They obey his every order—including the command in his song that they must not attack a specific foe. Even if the specified foe hits them in combat, the Sane suffer the blows with neither complaint nor retaliation.

If Wautto dies, his followers here at the inn fight to the death. Those who are elsewhere at present lose the will to remain in the cult without their leader.

Development: If not attacked, Wautto greets his scouts warmly, then looks inquiringly at the PCs. The cultists explain the recent events to Wautto, including the PCs' intervention, if any. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when they finish.

> "I am called Wautto, and these are the Sane," says the red-haired man. "I thank you for your kind intentions, but I must ask that you never commit violence on behalf of my people again. Violence in any form is a violation of our beliefs, and my people and I would rather die than have anyone commit the sin of attacking another creature on our behalf. Now I know you were only trying to help, but if you truly want to be of service to the world, then forswear all forms of violence and join us."

Wautto sees any disagreement with his opinions as a desire to debate the subject. Should the PCs seem interested in taking issue with his words, he invites them to hear him speak to the patrons of the Giant's Blade, since he intends to preach there. The PCs can win no support for positions other than Wautto's among the members of the Sane either. Any pleas for reason fall on deaf ears because the cultists are completely faithful to their leader and his ideals. Even the ones the PCs saved agree that under the circumstances, it would have been better to let them die.

When the PCs decide to either enter the inn or leave, go on to encounter 3, below.

3. A SANE GREETING (EL 6)

After a few minutes, the commotion outside the inn draws the attention of the proprietor.

Creatures: When Morrigan hears noise outside, he emerges with his oldest daughter Angel and his two younger sons, Dirk and Lance.

Morrigan: Male human ranger 5; CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d8+5; hp 27; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +5; Grp +7; Atk +8 melee (1d8+3/19–20, masterwork longsword) or +10 ranged (1d8+2/[TS]3, masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str bonus]); Full Atk +8 melee (1d8+3/19–20, masterwork longsword) or +10 ranged (1d8+2/[TS]3, masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str bonus]); SQ animal companion (none), favored enemies (giants +4, monstrous humanoids +2), wild empathy +5 (+1); AL NG; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Heal +9, Hide +11, Knowledge (nature) +10, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Spot +14, Survival +9; Endurance[B], Power Attack, Quick Draw, Rapid Shot[B], Track[B], Weapon Focus (composite longbow).

Favored Enemy (Ex): Morrigan gains a +4 bonus on his Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks when using these skills against giants. He gains the same bonus on weapon damage.

Against monstrous humanoids, he gains a +2 bonus on these skill checks and on weapon damage rolls.

Ranger Spells Prepared (1): 1st—*entangle* (DC 11).

Possessions: *+1 studded leather,* masterwork longsword, masterwork composite longbow (+4 Str bonus), 20 normal arrows, 10 cold iron arrows, 10 silvered arrows, *eyes of the eagle,* 3 *potions of cure light wounds,* 2,500 gp.

Angel: Female human bard 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d6+2; hp 9; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +1; Atk +2 melee (1d6/18–20, masterwork rapier) or +3 ranged (1d6/[TS]3, masterwork shortbow); Full Atk +2 melee (1d6/18–20, masterwork rapier) or +3 ranged (1d6/[TS]3, masterwork shortbow); SQ bardic knowledge +4, bardic music (countersong, *fascinate*, inspire courage +1) 2/day; AL NG; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 8, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Balance +3, Diplomacy +9, Gather Information +4, Hide +6, Jump +2, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Knowledge (local) +7, Listen +4, Move Silently +9, Perform (sing) +7, Sense Motive +4, Tumble +6; Point Blank Shot, Skill Focus (Move Silently).

Bardic Music: Angel can use bardic music 5 times per day. See the bard class features on page 29 of the *Player's Handbook*.

Countersong (*Su*): Angel can use music or poetics to counter magical effects that depend on sound.

Fascinate (*Sp*): Angel can use music or poetics to cause one or more creatures to become fascinated with her for 5 rounds.

Inspire Courage (*Su*): Angel can use music or poetics to bolster her allies against fear and improve their combat abilities.

Bard Spells Known (3/1): 0—*detect magic, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, read magic*; 1st—*charm person* (DC 13), *expeditious retreat*.

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather armor, masterwork rapier, masterwork shortbow, 20 arrows, 3 *potions of cure light wounds*, 20 gp.

Dirk and Lance: Male human ranger 1; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+1; hp 5; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk +3 melee (1d8+3/19–20, longsword) or +3 ranged (1d8+2/[TS]3, composite longbow [+2 Str bonus]); Full Atk +3 melee (1d8+3/19–20, longsword) or +3 ranged (1d8+2/[TS]3, composite longbow [+2 Str bonus]); SQ favored enemy (aberrations +2), wild empathy +1 (–3); AL NG; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Handle Animal +3, Heal +5, Knowledge (nature) +4, Listen +7, Ride +6, Spot +7, Survival +5; Alertness, Blind-Fight, Track[B].

Favored Enemy (Ex): Each boy gains a +2 bonus on his Bluff, Listen, Sense Motive, Spot, and Survival checks when using these skills against giants. He gains the same bonus on weapon damage.

Possessions: Studded leather armor, longsword, composite longbow (+2 Str bonus), 20 arrows, 550 gp.

Wautto the Sane: hp 27; see Appendix for statistics.

Cultists (24–33): hp 8; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: If forced to fight, Wautto and his followers use the tactics described in encounter 2. Unless they are directly attacked, Morrigan and his family stay out of any fighting.

Development: Morrigan tries to calm anyone who is getting heated about Wautto's beliefs and attitude. He then invites everyone inside, claiming it's far more pleasant to discuss philosophy inside the inn with a mug of ale than out in the street.

Wautto agrees with that sentiment and asks permission to preach within the tavern. Though he isn't comfortable with this request, Morrigan eventually succumbs to Wautto's charming demeanor and agrees.

4. PREACHING THE PEACE (EL 6)

Once inside the inn, Morrigan and his children busy themselves with making their new guests comfortable. Meanwhile, Wautto prepares for his speech. Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs are present when Wautto begins speaking.

> In addition to Wautto and his followers, about a dozen patrons sit at the inn's tables chatting. The innkeeper and his children bustle about filling orders for drinks and food. Meanwhile, Wautto commandeers a corner table, climbs atop it, and calls for attention.
>
> "My dear friends," he begins in a melodious voice. "I come to you today as an emissary of peace. We all say that we want peace, do we not? Then why do we not yet have it? Why are men, women, and children still slain in raids, wars, and bids for power?
>
> "The answer, my friends, is that though we may claim to want peace, our actions often do not reflect that desire. Those who walk about armed with weapons and magic may say they wish for peace, but they spread violence in their wake. My friends, peace cannot be won with a sword. Violence is violence, regardless of the cause in which it is employed, and those who perpetrate it can never be agents of peace. The end does not justify the means, my friends, and violence can never be a means to peace.
>
> Thus I say to you that any act you are unwilling to commit against your most trusted friend, you

must not commit against anyone at any time. Violence of any kind—even that which seems to be directed toward defending the weak or defeating evil—is wrong-headed.

"Furthermore, you must not treat violent people as heroes because doing so sends entirely the wrong message. Glorifying violence, even for a so-called good cause, simply encourages still more people to take up the sword and perpetuates the cycle of violence and death. Thus I say to you that everyone who carries a weapon or wields potentially harmful magic should be shunned. Give such people neither hospitality nor encouragement, and forbid them entry to your homes and places of business. Only in this way can your town become a Place of Sanity and be freed from the curse of violence and evil forever."

Wautto's words are greeted with disbelief and even a bit of derision at first, but he continues speaking in the same vein.

Creatures: The twelve patrons in the inn are visiting adventurers or constables in the nearby town. Also present are the innkeeper and his children, Wautto, and up to thirty-three cultists (twenty-four plus those the PCs saved from the achaierai).

Patrons (12): Male or female human warrior 1; CR 1/2; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+4; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/19–20, short sword); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+1/19–20, short sword); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will –1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Craft (any) +2, Handle Animal +1, Intimidate +3, Ride +2; Toughness, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: Studded leather armor, short sword.

Wautto the Sane: hp 27; see Appendix for statistics.

Cultists (24–33): hp 8; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: If forced to fight, Wautto and his followers use the tactics described in encounter 2. Unless they are directly attacked, Morrigan and his family stay out of any fighting.

Development: The patrons' initial attitude toward Wautto is unfriendly, but his Diplomacy modifier is so great that he may be able to make them consider his words anyway. He can make a check after speaking for 10 minutes, and he gains a +4 circumstance bonus for having a body of supportive followers present. Any patron whose attitude shifts to helpful offers to join the Sane, while those who become friendly agree only to consider his words and talk to him again later.

Any PC who speaks out against Wautto is also entitled to a Diplomacy check. To determine the crowd's reaction, subtract the highest Diplomacy check result that any PC obtains from Wautto's and use the difference as Wautto's check result. Thus, if even one PC speaks out, Wautto cannot shift anyone's attitude to helpful, and even friendly results become less likely.

Morrigan and his family have a greater resistance to Wautto's words than the patrons do. As the children of a retired hero, his sons and daughters are almost hostile to begin with, though they hide their attitude well. Thus, Wautto cannot shift their attitudes to better than indifferent regardless of his check result.

After Wautto finishes talking, he asks Morrigan to make the Giant's Blade a Place of Sanity and urges him to ask the PCs to leave. Morrigan promises to consider the request, though he obviously has no intention of agreeing to it. Furthermore, he offers Wautto a free room for the night, hoping to get him out of the common room. Wautto accepts the offer on the condition that his cultists also get free rooms, and Morrigan agrees. Thereafter, the Sane all retire for the night.

Because Morrigan and his family have great respect for heroes, they quietly offer the party free rooms as well. Angel in particular wants to hear about the characters' travels, and she confides to them that she plans to become a hero herself one day—though not until her brothers are older.

Treasure: The only treasure of note is Wautto's equipment.

5. THE EMISSARY (EL 7)

This encounter occurs only if the PCs decide to check out Wautto's room or spy on him in some other way. If they don't, Wautto makes his deal with the barghest Thaerraad during the night, and no one is the wiser until morning.

Wautto sits alone on his bed, sipping tea. He breathes slowly and deeply, closing his eyes occasionally, then opening them wide a few seconds later and looking quickly about the room. Periodically he gets up, checks under the bed, and looks in the room's one closet. Then he sits again to sip tea and start the cycle over.

Suddenly, an 8-foot-tall, goblinlike creature appears in the center of the room. Wautto sets down his cup and stands to face it, apparently perfectly calm. The giant goblin smiles to itself, then begins to speak.

"You may call me Thaerraad," it growls. "I have come on behalf of various forces interested in your movements. My employers have decided to offer you a bargain: In return for the sacrifice of one of your cultists each week, you shall gain great powers that will aid you in your quest to end heroism. What do you say?"

Creatures: Thaerraad was sent here by a coalition of fiends. When talking with Wautto, he is never specific about who sent him because he actually doesn't know—he received his instructions in a dream.

Thaerraad (Greater Barghest): hp 67; see *Monster Manual*, page 23.

Wautto: hp 27; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: If the PCs decide to attack during this meeting, Thaerraad makes no effort to defend Wautto, though he does fight back if he is attacked. Ten Sane cultists arrive wielding staves 1-4 rounds after a fight starts. Once they are on the scene, Thaerraad uses his spell-like abilities (*mass bull's strength* and *mass enlarge*) on the cultists and Wautto, then departs if possible. He returns at some later time to offer Wautto the deal again.

Development: If the PCs allow this meeting to play out undisturbed, Wautto is cagey at first. He takes the time to make a Sense Motive check to ensure that the deal has no hidden strings attached. Eventually, he is satisfied as to Thaerraad's veracity and agrees to his proposal.

Thaerraad promises to stay with Wautto until the first few sacrifices have been made. He takes the form of a dire wolf and stays by Wautto's side, trying to play the role of an animal companion rather than a thinking outsider. Before taking the barghest anywhere, Wautto casts an *undetectable alignment* spell on him.

6. OVERSTAYED WELCOME (EL 7)

This encounter takes place shortly after Wautto's meeting with Thaerraad. Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs are still in the Giant's Blade.

The raised voices of Wautto and Morrigan echo throughout the main floor of the Inn. "You must bar those who try to make the world a better place through violence from your doorstep!" cries Wautto. "Don't tell me how to run my tavern!" replies Morrigan.

Though not as loud, the voices of several of the Sane and a few patrons of the inn join in the argument.

Wautto and Morrigan were initially debating much more quietly, but as their anger rose, so did their volume. Wautto wants Morrigan to decide now to make his inn a Place of Sanity, and Morrigan refuses. Many of the Sane Cultists have become agitated, and it looks like the pacifists may erupt into violence.

Creatures: Wautto, Morrigan, and twelve cultists are arguing in the common room of the inn.

Wautto the Sane: hp 27; see Appendix for statistics.

Morrigan: hp 27; see encounter 3 for statistics.

Cultists (24–33): hp 8; see Appendix for statistics.

If the PCs show up and try to calm people, Wautto joins in that effort. Otherwise, he calms his people himself. Either way, he says Morrigan must do as his conscience dictates. Wautto instructs the Sane to go upstairs to bed, and he follows them shortly thereafter, promising Morrigan that he will come by in the morning to see whether his opinion has changed.

7. A MISSING ANGEL (EL 5)

After the incident in the wee hours of the morning, Wautto decides it's time to take more drastic measures. If the PCs have not slain him by the time the altercation in the inn is over, he sends twelve of his cultists to kidnap Angel, the inkeeper's daughter, while she is gathering berries and herbs in the woods at dawn. She is out of sight of the tavern at this point and has no weapons with which to defend herself. While the cultists are gone, Wautto prepares a note for Morrigan to find.

If the PCs are keeping an eye on Angel, they can intervene on her behalf. Read or paraphrase the following aloud in that case.

Angel strolls out into the dawn's early light with a basket on her arm. Walking purposefully into the woods, she stops at a berry bush and begins filling her basket. Suddenly, several robed figures leap from the nearby brush and lay hands on her. One places a hand over her mouth so that she can't scream.

The cultists take Angel to a cave in the nearby hills, where they bind her securely with ropes. All twelve remain with her as guards. They have orders to attack with deadly force if anyone attempts to rescue the girl.

Creatures: Angel and the twelve cultists are the only beings in the cave.

Angel: hp 9; see encounter 3 for statistics.

Cultists (12): hp 8; see Appendix for statistics.

Development: Even if the PCs prevent Angel's kidnapping or rescue her early, Wautto's ultimatum still reaches Morrigan's hands. Continue with encounter 8, below.

8. A PREMONITION OF DISASTER

Two of the cultists deliver Wautto's note to Morrigan as soon as he rises in the morning. Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs are in the inn at the time of delivery.

> Morrigan looks up from a paper in his hands with a grim expression on his face. "It seems our friend Wautto isn't willing to take no—or even maybe—for an answer, he says, and begins to read the note aloud.
>
> "*Innkeep,*
> *Violence begets violence. Your daughter shall pay the price for your lack of vision. Come to the fork in the hunting trail and swear allegiance to the Sane, or find yourself the father of only sons.*
>
> *Signed,*
> *-W-*"

Morrigan is livid about his daughter's abduction by these supposed pacifists, but he refuses to go and meet with Wautto himself. He knows a trap when he sees one, and he isn't willing to take the risk that the cultists might harm the rest of his family or burn down his tavern while he's gone.

Development: The innkeeper offers to pay the PCs 750 gp to return his daughter alive. If she dies, he promises to pay them the same amount for killing Wautto.

If the PCs have already left the inn at this point, he sends Dirk after them with the note to ask for their help.

9. A SANE FINALE (EL 8)

Wautto expects Morrigan to meet him at the fork in the trail and swear fealty to his cause. If he does so, Wautto plans to offer him as his first sacrifice to Thaerraad's masters.

Creatures: Wautto, Thaerraad, and twelve of the Sane wait at the fork of a nearby hunting trail.

Cultists (12): hp 8; see Appendix for statistics.

Thaerraad (Greater Barghest): hp 67; see *Monster Manual*, page 23.

Wautto: hp 27; see Appendix for statistics.

Tactics: Wautto has named the characters heroes and thus hated foes of peace. Therefore, as soon as any of the cultists see the PCs, they all attack immediately. The tactics used by Wautto, the Sane, and Thaerraad are as detailed in encounters 2 and 5, above.

Development: Angel is tied up in a cave about a quarter mile from the meeting place. Even if her father does not accede to Wautto's demands, she is in no danger because killing her brings the cult nothing. Wautto plans to convert Angel to his cause by making Diplomacy checks every day, until he eventually changes her attitude to helpful (essentially brainwashing her).

In the meantime, should her father fail to cooperate, he plans to send a note announcing that she is dead and threatening Morrigan's sons if he does not convert to the cause. If the PCs have not brought the matter to a close by that time, Morrigan capitulates and allows Wautto to name the Giant's Blade a Place of Sanity.

CONCLUDING THE ADVENTURE

If the characters saved Angel, Morrigan is eternally grateful and renames the tavern after them if they allow it. The PCs have a free place to stay from now on, and the attitude of the entire Morrigan family shifts to helpful with respect to the party.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

If Wautto dies, the Cult of the Sane disbands—no other member has the speaking ability to hold it together in the face of the blatant hypocrisy of its philosophy. If Wautto somehow escapes, the Sane are sure to pop up again someday.

APPENDIX: NPC STATISTICS

The statistics for Wautto and the cultists are as follows.

Cultist: Male or female human warrior 1; CR 1/2; Medium humanoid; HD 1d8+4; hp 8; Init +0;

Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, quarterstaff); Full Atk +3 melee (1d6+1, quarterstaff); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will –1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Craft (any) +2, Intimidate +3, Knowledge (religion) +2; Toughness, Weapon Focus (quarterstaff).

Possessions: Studded leather armor, quarterstaff.

Wautto the Sane: Male human bard 5; CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 5d6+10; hp 27; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk +2 melee (1d3–1, unarmed strike); Full Atk +2 melee (1d3–1, unarmed strike); SQ bardic knowledge +6, bardic music 5/day (countersong, *fascinate,* inspire competence, inspire courage +1); AL NE (appears N because of *undetectable alignment* spell); SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 8, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 18.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Concentration +9, Diplomacy +19, Escape Artist +8, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (religion) +8, Listen +7, Perform (oratory) +12, Sense Motive +7; Iron Will, Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Spell Focus (enchantment).

Bardic Music: Wautto can use bardic music five times per day. See the bard class features on page 29 of the *Player's Handbook.*

Countersong (*Su*)*:* Wautto can use music or poetics to counter magical effects that depend on sound.

Fascinate (*Sp*)*:* Wautto can use music or poetics to cause one or more creatures to become fascinated with him for 5 rounds.

Inspire Competence (*Su*)*:* Wautto can use music or poetics to help an ally succeed at a task.

Inspire Courage (*Su*)*:* Wautto can use music or poetics to bolster his allies against fear and improve their combat abilities.

Bard Spells Known (3/4/2): 0—*detect magic, flare* (DC 14), *ghost sound* (DC 14), *light, mage hand, message;* 1st—*charm person* (DC 16), *cure light wounds, Tasha's hideous laughter* (DC 16), *undetectable alignment;* 2nd—*blur, eagle's splendor, invisibility.*

Languages: Common, Orcish.

Possessions: *+1 glamered mithral breastplate, cloak of Charisma +2, pearl of power* (2nd-level spells).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Owen Kirker Clifford Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Oklahoma. He attended the TSR Writer's Workshop held at the Wizards of the Coast Game Center in 1997 and moved to the Seattle area in 2000, after accepting a job as a Game Designer at Wizards of the Coast, Inc. Fourteen months later, he returned to Oklahoma with his wife and three cats to pick up his freelance writer/developer career. He has author and co-author credits on numerous Star Wars and EverQuest projects, as well as *Bastards and Bloodlines* from Green Ronin. He also has producer credits for various IDA products, including the Stand-Ins printable figures.